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**Testimony*
In Support of **HB 5073** and **HB 5395**
Before the Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2010

Chairwoman Harp, Chairman Geragosian, Senator Debicilla, Representative Miner, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify, on behalf of the House Republican Caucus, on **HB 5073 – An Act Concerning The Constitutional Spending Cap as well on HB 5395 – An Act Concerning Benchmarks For State-Funded Programs And Services.**

In 1991, when faced with an enormous budget deficit and contemplated the implementation of an income tax, the State proposed a constitutional amendment in an effort to control spending and avoid future deficits. The taxpayers overwhelming voted 81% in favor of amending the Constitution to require a “spending cap”.

Since then, the state has created statutory exemptions that ignore the spirit and intent of this constitutional amendment. Without these exemptions, I believe the State would have been better equipped to handle this latest downturn in our economy.

It's about time we live up to a promise that we made, and implement the spending cap as the constitutional amendment is written. The amendment requires us to set a reasonable rate of growth on all spending, except debt service.

I don't pretend that the global economic recession has nothing to do with the deficit we face today. It would be just as foolish to think that the 250% increase in state spending over the last 19 years has no bearing on the deficit as well. That means, one way or another, taxpayers are paying 250% more than what they paid in

1991. The spending cap is an important tool, but I would argue that the reason for the cap is not to put great restraints on spending, but to protect taxpayers.

Rather, the spending cap is more like an alarm that tells us we're taking too much money out of the pockets of families and businesses. That's why we tie the rate of spending growth to personal income growth. A strong spending cap keeps our state on strong economic ground and keeps us competitive with other states.

Instead of getting upset and outraged about the legislature's inability to keep taxes low by controlling spending, families and businesses are choosing to vote with their feet. That's why we've seen almost no population growth and even less job growth, and this trend will continue until we make some major changes. Implementing the constitutional spending cap would be a good first step to reversing that trend. For these reasons, I support the passage of HB 5073.

In addition, I would like to express my support for HB 5395 – An Act Concerning Benchmarks For State-Funded Programs And Services. This bill is similar to a proposal submitted by the House Republican Caucus. The concept is simple: If it's not broken, don't fix it. But, if it's not working, get rid of it. The bill would establish benchmarks for every state program. If those benchmarks aren't met, then the program goes away. This is a common sense proposal, whose time has come.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue.